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Bomb the system

the first drama about graffiti in twenty years

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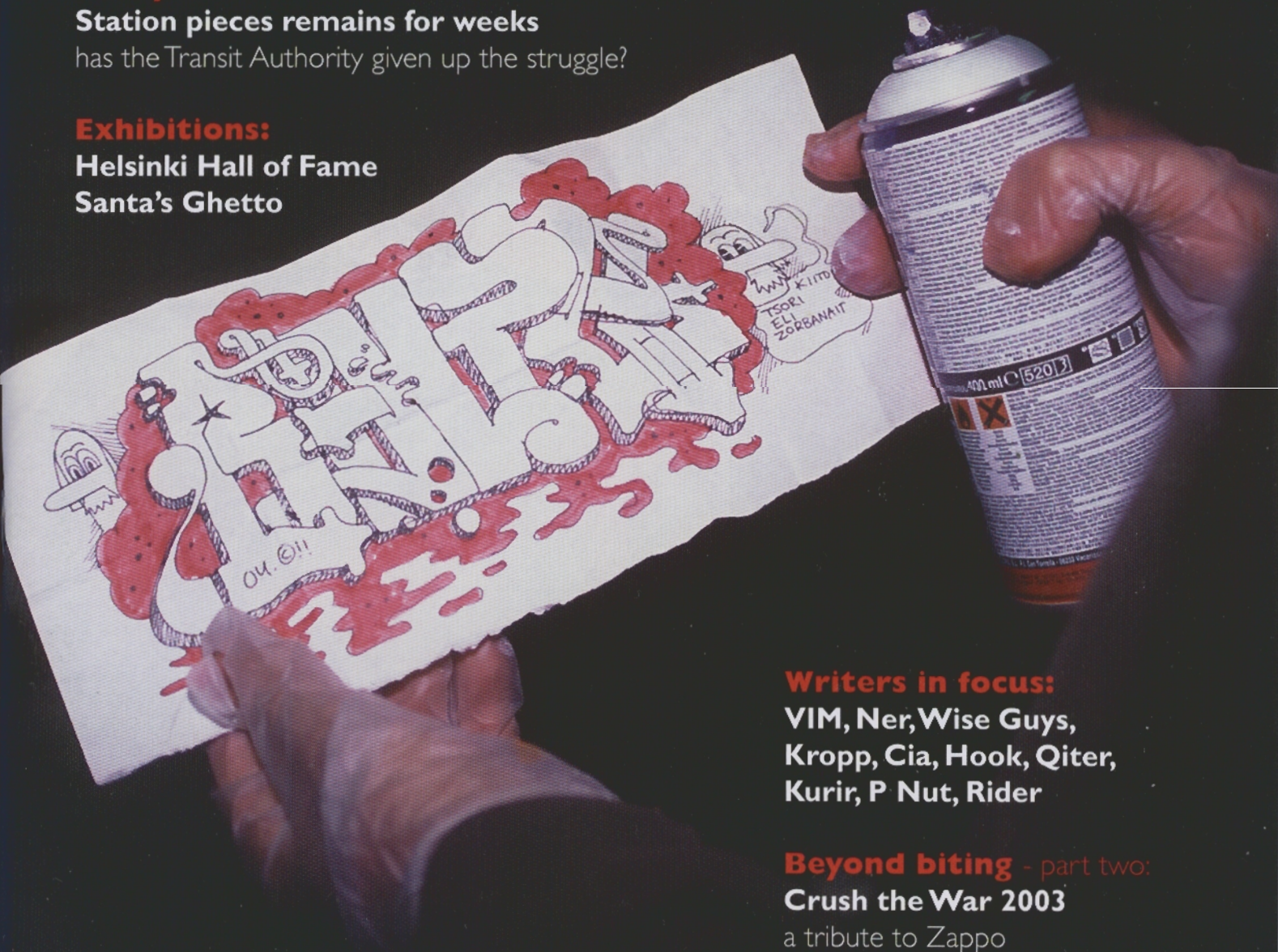
Station pieces remains for weeks

has the Transit Authority given up the struggle?

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Kurir, P Nut, Rider

Beyond biting - part two:

Crush the War 2003

a tribute to Zappo



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Twenty years of Swedish graffiti

The first graffiti pieces in Sweden were made in 1984. In September of that year, **Style Wars** was first shown on TV, increasing interest in graffiti and hiphop. Of course these are not exact dates; probably a piece would have been made in 1983, or even in 1973, after the appearance of the first article on graffiti in the Swedish press.

But 1984 is a good starting-point, and therefore, the 20th anniversary of Swedish graffiti is upon us. We will be marking this during the year: what graffiti was like before, how it has changed, and how it appears today. In this issue we meet **Tony Silver**, who made Style Wars in collaboration with **Henry Chalfant**, and therefore played a big part in spreading hip hop culture across the world.

Despite having been around for 20 years, graffiti is still as controversial as ever. The Swedish parliament has voted through an increase in penalties for illegal writing. The message is "We're getting tough on scrawling", something that was being said back in 1987.

It is still unclear how Swedish graffiti will be affected by this intensification in penalties. UP will focus on this over the coming year. Please get in touch if you have any suggestions on what we should cover.

In this issue, we have made some changes to the contents. We have chosen to focus on ten writers or crews, with one feature for each name. Some really great graffiti is being made right now, and we hope to be able to present more writers in this way this year.

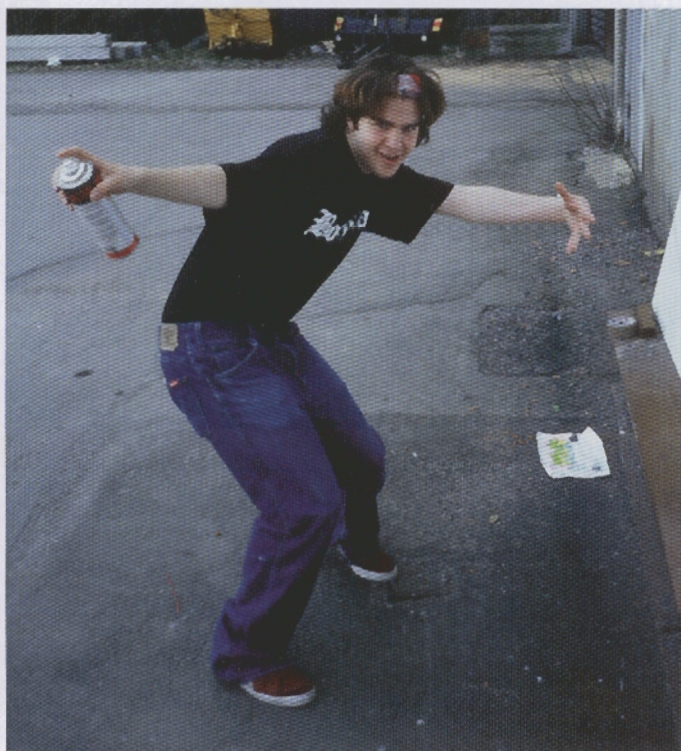
Dimhe – Rest in peace

Dimhe, one of the great bombers on the Stockholm Subway Red Line, passed away in January 2004. In the latest years, he wrote graffiti irregularly. Personal difficulties took a lot of his energy and marred his life.

Dimhe could communicate with everyone. He left a deep impression in those he met. He had opinions about everything and excelled at argumentation. Despite his youth, his reasoning was mature.

His friendly and generous ways provided a link between different groups of writers. Bomber and philosopher rolled into one.

Dimhe is deeply missed by his family and friends.



Dimhe, 2000.



This is what graffiti could look like in Stockholm back in 1985-1986; Cherno and a friend showing their skills. Swedish graffiti has a long tradition and a rich history that is shared by the many writers who have contributed to the evolution during the last twenty years.



Dimhe, Finland 2002/2003.



Dimhe, Finland 2000.



Underground Productions

Box 773
S-120 02 Årsta
Sweden

www.underground-productions.se
up@underground-productions.se

Cover Photo by Malcolm Jacobson:
Ralph painting at the Helsinki Hall of
Fame exhibition (see page 44-45).

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Allt flerfaldigande förbjudet enligt lag
Legally responsible: Jacob Kimvall
Editorial Staff: Björn Almqvist, Tobias Barenthin
Lindblad, Malcolm Jacobson, Torkel Sjöstrand.
Correspondents: Elias, Joel.
Text: Björn, Jacob, Malcolm, Tobias, Torkel,
Kristoffer Ekman, Gustaf Kjellin
Layout: Torkel, Malcolm
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Tier, Dne, Uze, Que at Zinkensdamm subway station in Stockholm, 2003. One of many pieces that have lasted for weeks.

Why is the Transit Authority chilling with the swab?

According to the media, 4000 more cases of graffiti were reported in Stockholm in 2003 than in the preceding year, and police reporting has increased by more than hundred per cent in six years. Media reports in this area should be taken with a pinch of salt, but it's quite clear that more graffiti is visible in Stockholm today than there has been for a long time.

Cleaning graffiti in inner-city subway stations used to be high priority for **SL** (the Stockholm Transit Authority). For a long time, it was common practice to systematically remove colour paintings before tags, even though the general public prefers the former. However, in recent months, the situation has almost been reversed. Graffiti pieces have been allowed to remain for days, even weeks. A significant amount of pieces could be seen in the weeks before the notorious anti-graffiti laws were passed in parliament.

The new situation has led to speculation and rumor among writers. Did officials at **Connex** (the company that is subcontracted to run the subway by **SL**) consciously decide to let the pieces remain on stations so that politicians might get an extra opportunity to see the scope of the problem with their own eyes? Probably not: since then, pieces have continued to appear in stations and been allowed to remain for long periods of time.

In the past year, **SL** has been hit by a series of scandals, including bribery, embezzlement and employment of undeclared labor. Concurrently, the company is struggling with strained

finances. Has all this led to a sitting-on-the-fence attitude to graffiti, or has **SL** given up the struggle?

Another rumor has it that the staff who remove graffiti have not received the health and safety training necessary to work on the tracks. If it were to come to light that **SL** used untrained staff, yet another scandal would break.

SL's press secretary Maria Adolfsson will

not confirm that the company has stopped prioritizing graffiti. In short, she does not believe any of the above-mentioned theories. There is simply no explanation as to why the pressure guns are being kept holstered for the time being.

However, the transport company has not been completely untouched by the last year's events. Maria Adolfsson confirms that, at the time of writing, a new, softer line against graffiti is being drafted. This will involve more CCTVs (cameras) and alarms, but no plainclothes operatives such as the Falcks, who were sacked shortly after the security chief **Kjell Hultman** met with the same fate.

Kristoffer Ekman



Mkis - Sundbyberg



Tony – Universitetet



Dne, Tier – Skanstull



KCN, FY – Karlaplan



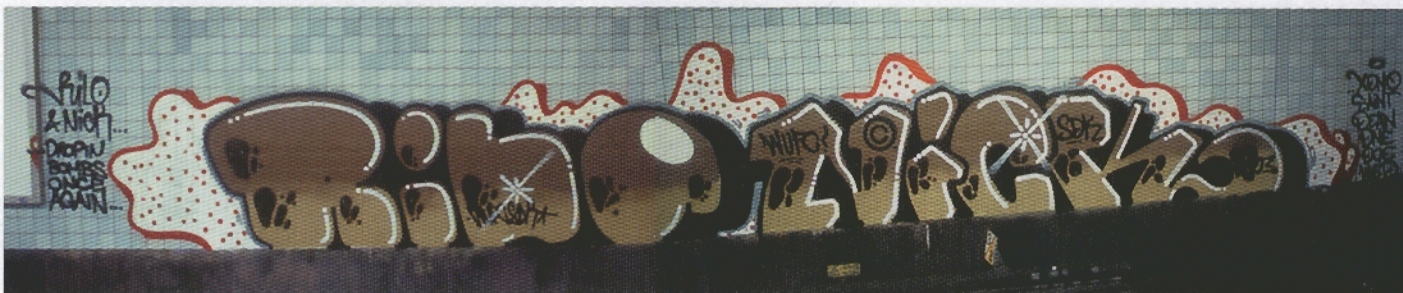
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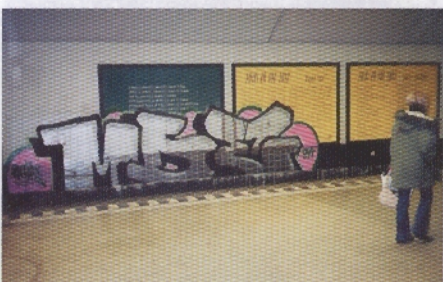
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Crush the War by Zappo, 1986. "When we were painting the ticket collector came down and said that he would blow in the PA-system if the police were coming", Zappo says.

"We wanted to do a piece that children can appreciate"

In December 2003 Moral, along with Show and Rocket, did a piece with the text Crush the War at Örnberg's subway station in southern Stockholm. In the same place as Stockholm's probably most long-lived station piece - Crush the War by Zappo - could be found between 1986 and 1988. Passengers were disappointed when it was removed, Zappo says.

Moral is a 29-year-old bloke from the Stockholm suburb Fisksätra. He speaks a somewhat old-fashioned Stockholm dialect – goody gumdrops – he says when I tell him that I want to write about the new Crush the War piece.

Moral started writing in 1985 when he was eleven years old. He painted most actively between 1988 and 1991. Then there were other things that got his attention.

"I have always been an adrenaline junkie, I have come to understand that now."

Today he runs his own business as a painter and he is a trained painter and a graduate from a School of Economics. But the past year his interest in graffiti has come to life again.

"All of a sudden me and my old mates started to talk about painting again. When we had been out painting we remembered how much fun it is. We are not going to take over the city. You can do a piece when you have managed to throw together a cool sketch. I mostly hang with old mates from my graffiti days, sometimes when there is a party it starts to rattle in some box with old cans. As soon as you start painting again you think about graffiti and cool walls all the time."

Why have you done a new Crush the war piece?

"I was inspired by a documentary film by **Stocktown**. Musician **Divine Styler** talked about that he does not understand hip hop of today. To him hip hop was going with his dad to Central Park and watch him play disco and funk records. He wants to recreate that feeling with his music."

Moral wanted to recreate the feeling graffiti gave him as a kid and a teenager.

"When I was a kid graffiti pieces stirred up very strong feelings. It was so damn cool when the pieces popped up in the mid-eighties. My grandfather lived in southern Stockholm, when I visited him I saw Zappo's, Merley's and Toy Company's pieces. I have a lot of memories from particularly Crush the War, my aunt had to drag me away from it."

Show and Rocket are childhood friends of mine. We talked about the wall at Örnberg, that it would be fun to do a cool colour piece there. Rocket suggested that we should do a new Crush the War. It was not so much for the message, but more as a fun thing to do and a



Crush the War by Moral, Show and Rocket, 2003.



tribute to Zappo. He was one of the first writers in the city and has done beautiful colour pieces year after year. We wanted to show our appreciation."

What were your thoughts on the design of your version?

"That it could be an old piece with classic graffiti style, this is what a graffiti c and s looks like! We wanted it to be colourful. Something to make people happy, that kids can appreciate."

Families with children looked at the piece, even the tube driver thought it was good.

When I was a kid people did not write as aggressively as today. Those who wrote in the old days just wanted to do something nice. Nowadays it is not possible to spend a whole weekend on a piece, so it creates another type of graffiti.

But if you make an effort the pieces get appreciated by the public, although graffiti gets so trashed in the media."

Since Moral has not written much lately he called his old friend Rilo to get suggestions on which cans that make a good coat directly on concrete and which caps that are good.

"It is wicked fun to shop for paint now, there are cans in all the colours of the rainbow. You used to have to make do with opal green, sapphire blue, fuchsia pink, pastel pink, dark red and belton purple. None of the things we used to write with was meant for graffiti (editor's note: car paint, anti-corrosive paint, hairspray caps, etc.). But as for style I have not changed since I stopped writing at the start of the nineties."

How is it to write today compared to fifteen years ago, when you were most active?

"It used to be more of a natural thing to write, you were always excited to go out. Now you are more afraid of getting chased away, you used to just laugh when you had been chased away by the cops. But when you write you get the same feeling today as you used to, you feel at ease."

That the punishment for writing graffiti has become more severe since the turn of the year is nothing that deters you?

"I have not got caught that much so I expect it to go well. It was damn fun to write at the subway station. It feels weird that three thirty-year-old guys do these things. When you are there writing you feel – I am not supposed to be here – this should be taken care of by the kids. But to do a small piece now and then is a good way to stay young."

Malcolm Jacobson





Dez (top) and his crew in New York, early 1980s.

Style Wars – How graffiti went global

Tony Silver is in Stockholm for a screening of his documentary *Style Wars*, which is being shown again at the 2003 Stockholm Film Festival. The movie was instrumental in establishing graffiti in Europe, and to many graffiti writers, it is what *Quadrophenia* was to mods or the *Sex Pistols* were to punk rockers.

"Do you know who this looks like?" Tony Silver gazes at the cover to *UP #24*. The picture depicts a guy in a cap leaning out of a subway car.

"It looks like **Cap**." He leafs through the magazine and stops at the subway spread.

"Where are these pieces made?" he asks. I tell him how a backjump is made, that it usually takes less than ten minutes and that the train is taken out of traffic within a few hours. He carries on looking and indicates a picture of pieces done on a subway car by **Bug**, **Oven** and **Roxy**. "This can't be done in ten minutes?"

"No, that was probably done in a yard, during a longer period," I reply.

Tony Silver thinks for a while, and then says that it is all very interesting.

"I am stunned. It's like a lot of other forms of world culture: it persists, and after a while there's no more knowledge about why you do it the way you do, but you carry on. And that memorializes the first people who did it. It's a very emotional idea."

For a long time, *Style Wars* was unavailable on the European market; instead, a number of fairly low-quality video copies have been in circulation and fascinated generations of graffiti enthusiasts. **Quik's** 'This is it!' and **Skeme's** 'It's a Matter of Bombing' are constant references both in graffiti and music.

But now, the film has been released on DVD. The two discs also feature much extra material such as edited scenes, interviews and images.

How did you come up with the title *Style Wars* – was it from Noc's piece, or did he get it from you?

"I guess we got it from **Noc's** piece. For a long time, we didn't have a title for the film, but were thinking of *Style Wars*, and that's what we opted for in the end.

Noc got it out of his own head, his brain, which is one of the sharpest in graffiti history.

And one of the most tortured as well. To me, his piece is one of the greatest works of graffiti art that has ever been created. The more you look at it, the more layers and meanings you find inside it. It's not the most decorative, but it is the most profound. It's as if the piece contains the whole world of graffiti artists and the Transit Authority and the trains and all the ways you are living and doing this. This is the inside of Noc's head, on a train. It's truly incredible."

Tony Silver produces the *Style Wars* piece from the DVD booklet and unfolds it. Meticulously, he starts to go through the different aspects that he sees in the piece, and explains the feeling of writing on a subway car: "One of the things I realized when I started making the movie, and came down on the platform or on the subway tracks next to a train, is that it's like **Dondi** says in the movie: 'metal giants'. I mean, no boy could fail to be excited. I love filming trains."

Did you know anything about graffiti before you started making *Style Wars*?

"I knew it was there, because it was everywhere. You can't imagine what it was like in New York in the early 70s. Every slightest surface was covered in graffiti, every subway car. You can see why some people got a bit worried by it. You knew it was there; sometimes it was interesting, sometimes boring. But understanding the culture was a different matter.

What I think a lot of people didn't understand was the relationship between the condition of New York City and the origin of that condition, the decay of New York City, and the decay and neglect of the people living in the suburbs and the hoods, the ghettos. A lot was said about it, but nothing really happened." Tony Silver mentions the New York tradition of old-fashioned liberal tolerance. "Like, they're a pain in the ass, but we can't punish them *too* much."

Consequently, when graffiti took over New York, writers could not be sentenced unless they had been caught red-handed. Tolerance was at exactly the right level for graffiti to carry on and grow. "I don't think anything like that would be possible again," says Tony Silver.

Only one scene in *Style Wars* depicts illegal graffiti actually being done: Cap spraying a subway car.

Didn't the writers want you to film them while they were writing?

"A lot of factors entered into it. Firstly, we were shooting film, not video. And we wanted it to look perfect. And in those days, there was no quick film, only cinema film. So to get it to work with the light and everything, we used black-and-white film. Which wasn't completely without problems either, and I didn't want to make the whole movie in black-and-white.

Another problem was getting permits to film in the yards with lights and all. That was actually true for stations and trains as well."

He says that the rules governing filming on **MTA** (Metropolitan Transit Authority) property were very strict. Before they could even think of filming, they had to buy a \$10,000 insurance policy. Then they had to get the permit itself.

"One of the bosses at MTA was an old college buddy from Columbia University. He gave us permission to film, but the deal was, we couldn't shoot anybody actually doing it. Then the Cap thing just happened. I think that because it's the only scene of its kind in the movie, it's ten times more shocking."

Did any writers offer to be filmed while they were writing?

"Seen. And we did a scene with him in the 6 yard. We attached a camera to him, which was very complicated. We hired the kind that undercover cops used. We sneaked in with the camera and lights and started shooting, and Seen started writing. Suddenly we heard someone coming and Seen started running and we got the hell out of there. It was ridiculous. Not like today, you just go in with a video camera and a flashlight."

Making the movie took several years. *Style*



Style Wars by Noc 167 – New York 1981. This piece is one of the greatest works of graffiti art that has ever been created, according to Tony Silver.

Wars was filmed in the early 80s. The team filmed for about two years before they started the editing process. Then it took almost a further two years to finance the project. It turned out that some people didn't like the idea of a graffiti movie at all.

"There were people who literally ran away. They said 'not only do we not want to fund this film, we want to stop this film being made. And stop anybody from helping you out.'"

It was during these years that hip-hop got a foothold in New York and started to grow. The idea of the four elements – b-boying, DJing, graffiti and emceeing – was developed.

Apart from writers, *Style Wars* also features a few scenes with breakdancers from the group Rocksteady Crew.

Were there writers who did breakdancing?

"I wanted to do a movie about something that was going on in the real world, with a lot of fighting, opposition, strife and drama in it"

"Yeah, there were a few. 'Cause everybody wanted to get up. And there were different forms of doing it. But graffiti was a bit different, because everybody could do it. Rich white kids too. And at first, graffiti wasn't accepted as part of hip-hop, since too many different kinds of people were doing it."

Tony Silver says that from the start, he wanted to make a short movie about b-boying, but also included graffiti after having got in touch with **Henry Chalfant**, writer of the book *Subway Art* and participant in the production of *Style Wars*.

"Henry had this education in anthropology. He thought the whole thing through as if he were visiting some remote country and wanted to study it as an outsider. That was important to him."

I wanted to do a movie about something that was going on in the real world, with a lot of fighting, opposition, strife and drama in it. Henry was more protective of the youths involved.

So when the Cap question arose, he became a bit guarded; he was afraid it would blow the trust that he so painfully and carefully developed for a long time. But finally he was convinced about Cap's role in the drama, the real-life drama that was going on."

What did the writers think about Cap's involvement?

"I'd like to think that in the long run they thought that 'yes, this is a drama that is bigger than just me and my beef, and I am glad to be part of it'. Which is what it was. That's why I used the music I did. Wagner! That was inspired by the movie *Excalibur*. The writers were like knights round their own round table. This

became an inspiring and romantic thought."

Despite managing to finance the film and get it finished, the troubles didn't stop there. The TV channel that was to broadcast *Style Wars* in New York only aired it once, and then banned it. "It was too dangerous. It was shown all over the States but only once in New York."

What did the writers think when you first showed them the movie?

"We had a screening in a movie theater in Times Square. The owners weren't that interested, but I managed to hire the theater and a 16 mm projector. We made some fliers and spread the word. On the night, the place was jam packed, 600 seats, and not a single empty one. I was up in the projection booth, so I couldn't see anything, but I heard a lot of

shrieks and noise. I didn't know what people would think. Finally, I risked going outside, and the people were insane, it was fantastic."

But the writers in the movie theater weren't restricting themselves to making noise.

"They were bombing the entire theater. The toilets and the lobby. They were destroyed. At first, when the owner saw the audience reaction, he was delighted and wanted to show it several times, he saw that he could make money out of the whole deal. But in the end he said 'These people are animals! Get them out of here! Look what they've done!' So that was the end of that. Word got out and nobody wanted to run the movie."

Not all writers were happy with the film.

"One of them threatened Henry, saying 'I'm gonna fuck you up'. I'm not going to say who, but it was a real old-school writer who felt he hadn't been shown in the right light. After that, Henry went in training and got a black belt in Karate. But most of them were pretty satisfied."

Did you make any money out of the movie?

"Not really. Over a 20-year period, we've made a bit out of licenses and people wanting to use images from the movie, etc. We may make a bit out of the DVD. But I just want people to see the movie, because 20 years ago, we couldn't get anyone to show it. And now that we're showing the movie at different festivals and so on, we're also showing *Style Wars Revisited*. It's a movie with 45 extra minutes that we put together partly with material from the DVD and also some scenes that haven't been shown previously."

Do you still find graffiti interesting?

"Yeah, I do. But sometimes I get tired of it."



Min One.

What I think is incredibly interesting is that the world has changed so much and graffiti still means so much from generation to generation. And the test now for young people, I think, is not only getting up, not only making something beautiful, but whether they can send more sophisticated images about their consciousness about the world and what's in it. How complicated it is and how dangerous it is.

Now it's easy to be simple about it, but it's harder to be smart about it, the way Banksy is smart, the way Nug and Pike are smart. Do you know the video they made – Nug and Pike? What I love about it is that it is the first work of graffiti art I've ever seen that makes fun of graffiti.

Everybody is very serious about themselves. Everybody is jealous and paranoid. The whole culture is built on paranoia. And that's a part of it. It's an important part of the energy. But do what you want to do, and if it's great and it comes from you and it comes from the street, that's what matters."

Torkel Sjöstrand

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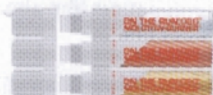


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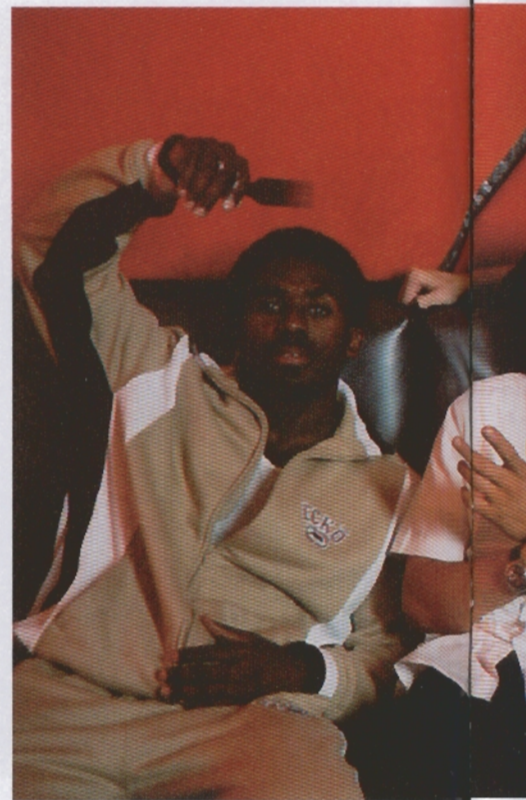


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Bomb the system

Bomb the System is the first film drama about graffiti in twenty years. Over the course of a few hectic days, the writer Blest dazedly tries to make the most important decision of his life.

Adam Bhala Lough discovered the fun of bombing the system ten years ago in Washington D.C. when he was 14 years old. Getting up and doing something illegal was a rush. He was never really much interested in investing much time in a piece and didn't really know much about graffiti, nor did he care.

Adam's great passion was film. When he finished school, he got a job in a video store and watched movies all day long for two years. Then he began filming his drug-addicted friends and made a short film, which he sent to the N.Y.U. Institute of Film and Television. Adam was admitted to the school and moved into a student home in New York, where he shared a room with a graffiti writer.

"He put me in touch with the history and artistic side of graffiti. My interest went from someone who was into tagging to someone who sees graffiti as a legitimate art form, and sees how much deeper it is."

Adam was told stories about **Smith**, who wrote on the Brooklyn Bridge, the old graffiti policemen **Tom and Jerry**, and how the vandal squad once forced a writer to empty his spray can onto his buddy's clothes. Adam's graffiti knowledge and interest grew, and when his thesis project was due, he wrote and directed a short film about a graffiti writer who is killed

by a policeman. This became the basis for *Bomb the System*, the first drama about graffiti in 20 years. It concerns the graffiti writer **Blest**, who has just finished high school. He now faces the choice of perpetuating an accelerating war against the vandal squad with his friends, or moving to San Francisco to start at an art school. Over the course of a few hectic days, he dazedly tries to make the most important decision of his life.

New York is known for its intolerant stance on graffiti. Was it hard getting a permit to shoot the film?

It was very hard. We had a permit to begin with, but then we did graffiti everywhere, quite illegally, and the mayor's office shut us down. They told us that if we continued filming, we'd be arrested and our equipment would be confiscated. So we went to Brooklyn and shot the last bit secretly.

Is it true that one of the producers was arrested?

We were out bombing tags to advertise the movie the night before the world premiere in New York. Sol Tryon was arrested in a subway station. They held him for 16 hours. When they let him out, a half-hour before the premiere, he was wearing the same clothes as the previous night and smelled like shit. But he

ran to the screening and got there just in time. **It's a pretty bleak story. Why have you chosen to show this image?**

It's about living in a big city at a time when you don't know what the hell you're gonna do with your life. Everybody tells you what you should be doing, but you don't know what you want to do yourself. But the bleakness has nothing to do with graffiti. Graffiti is the only positive thing in the movie. It's the only thing that unites the guys. The only time they're really happy is when they are writing graffiti, stealing paint or making out with really hot girls. Everything else is dark. That's how I am with my work as a writer-director. The only time I'm really happy is when I'm working with my art. And I know many graffiti writers feel the same way. That's why they are dependent on it in a big way.

Mark Webber, who plays Blest, is a pretty big independent movie actor. How did you get him to play the lead in your first feature film?

After we cast Mark, I found out he'd been a writer in Philly. He got kicked out of high school for writing. I thought he was just a good actor who'd suit the part. Mark can get any independent movie he wants and would probably not have taken the part if it hadn't been about graffiti. For years, he'd been talking to his friends about doing a graffiti film, but nobody sat down to write one.

Were graffiti writers the target audience you had in mind when making the film?

It would be ignorant of me to make a movie exclusively intended for graffiti writers. I'd



Gano, Lee and Mark Webber together with the director Adam Bhala Lough.

probably never get to make a movie again, because America is an ultra-capitalist society. When you make a movie, you have to try to get a large audience. It's your responsibility to reimburse your backers. The problem with a lot of movies about graffiti I've seen is that they are so specific that only writers can understand them. If you discuss different aspects and don't just stick to filming some of your buddies, the film will have more appeal. If you think that's selling out and totally whack, I completely understand you. I used to think that way, but that was before I had a lot of debt hanging over me.

"If you're a hardcore bomber, your life is hectic. You'll get busted, you'll get beat down"

I feel that some of the characters are stereotypes. Do you think the movie gives a believable view of the life of a graffiti writer?

That's what it's like to be a writer in New York. All the stuff you see in the movie may not happen to you in a few days, but believe me, that's how it is. **Semz** from the **IRAK** crew, who appears in the movie, has been arrested 13 times by the Vandal Squad. He got his head busted open by one of the Vandal Squad guys. Semz is an essential New York graffiti writer, he's an all-city king, and if I was gonna try and make a movie based on his life, it would be a hell of a lot more over the top than *Bomb the System*. Normal kids who just get up now and then don't go through this. But if you're a hardcore bomber, your life is hectic. You've chosen a tough path. You'll get busted,

you'll get beat down. The cop **Billy Cox** has got an attitude that stems from stories that oldschool writers told me about Tom and Jerry, two ruthless cops from back in the day in New York. They'd break people's fingers and arms and fuck them up. They were crazy. I took their attitude and mixed it together and put that into Bobby Cox. People think he's over the top, but believe me, he isn't.

And the drugs?

They come from being a kid in New York. When you grow up, you experiment with drugs. A lot of writers don't do drugs, but a lot of writers do fuckin' smoke dust, smoke

blunts, drink 40s and go out and wreck shit. That's just the way it is.

What is the most important point you want to make with the movie?

I think the movie gives you a certain perspective on the life of a graffiti writer. A lot of people dismiss writers as pathetic vandals who don't do anything with their lives. But when you find out more about the culture and the art form, you get a deeper appreciation for it. Hopefully, your grandmother will like it and will understand that graffiti writers aren't such bad people.

Will you make any more movies about graffiti?

I think this is it, man. Anyone who ever did a tag in New York is on a mission. You've got an itch, and writers know what I'm talking



Blest faces the choice of perpetuating an accelerating war against the vandal squad with his friends, or moving to San Francisco to start at an art school.

about. I haven't got that any more. I got it out of my system with this movie. I've lived in the graffiti world 24/7 for the past two years. I've hung out with writers non-stop. I can't keep up with them. You can't hang out with writers like that, they're crazy, man.

Björn Almqvist

Bomb the System will probably be available on DVD some time in 2004.



Main actor Mark Webber was kicked out of high school for writing.



Nug – Torino, Italy

Vandals In Motion

VIM is one of the most famous crews in Sweden. It was founded in 1988 by the Stockholm writers Akay, Dudge and News. Since then, many members have come and gone. Today, VIM consists of Nug, Aman, Bluff and News. After more than fifteen years of writing, VIM are as active as ever. UP put Bluff up against the wall.

What inspires you?

To keep developing. To try to get better all the time.

What motivates you?

Writing itself. It's such a great thing to do. I don't want to give up, but go on and achieve new things. It's a challenge.

What makes a good piece?

There should be flow. The wholeness and good execution make for a good piece. I like it clean and flowing, like Nug or Aman do.

What's bad about graffiti?

There are too many unaware people doing graffiti. They don't really have anything to do with graffiti, but just landed there. You could dismiss a large number of graffiti writers in Stockholm.



Vim – Stockholm subway



VimNer



Cae, Monk, Bait – Stockholm commuter train



Riff – Stockholm commuter train



Aman – Stockholm commuter train



Moas – Stockholm commuter train



Vim – Stockholm subway



Ner,Vim – Scania commuter train



Skill, Balls – Stockholm commuter train





A wall by Kropp – Stockholm 2003

Kropp

Kropp is a Stockholm writer who has developed both tags and character painting in the past few years. Lately, he has been experimenting with 3D effects on tags.

When did you start?

I first went out writing around 1999.

Do you belong to a crew?

IB, with Glue and Unik. I think it's important to be in a crew. The crew thing is unique to graffiti. Crews can look very different. Ours is relaxed, and we like each other. I get inspired by the others and their drive.

What else inspires you?

I'm inspired by anything that comes my way, anything cool. Actually, I don't think about it much, so I don't really know. I try to do as many pieces as I can, and not just graffiti. But the style doesn't change much anyway. Perhaps the time factor is more important: I have less time on the street than in my studio.

What makes a good piece?

The feeling I get out of a piece is what makes it good. Pieces communicate with their beholders. I think a lot about pieces I see outside – that's the mystery I like – who made this? When I write, I sometimes approach it based on how many others will see the piece. I also think it's fun, and very easy, to break some trends in graffiti culture, like how the letter should look. There's a lot of talk about what graffiti is and how it should look. I want to depict everything you can do. And it feels as if I'm moving towards something far removed from graffiti.

What's bad about graffiti?

It takes a lot of time from other things. There are also trends in graffiti I don't like much, things I don't find creative.

What motivates you?

That it's fun. What makes it negative – the time it takes – also makes it good. I always have something to do! And of course, a lot of my friends are writers, all I have to do is make a phone call and go out. To me, the question is: what should I prioritize? Being visible or developing?



Kropp – Norrköping 2003



Kropp – Stockholm 2003



Kropp – Stockholm 2003



By Kropp – Jönköping 2004



7upp, Kropp – Stockholm 2003



Kropp – Stockholm 2004



Kropp – Stockholm 2003



Kropp – Stockholm 2004



Kropp – Stockholm 2003



Cia – Stockholm commuter train

Cia

Cia was founded in Stockholm in 2000 by Ellr, Help and Vito. They have become distinguishable by well-executed pieces on the commuter trains around Stockholm. UP asked Help a few well-chosen questions.

What does Cia mean?

It doesn't really mean anything. It's just Cia.

What inspires you?

Other writers. Something I see or read. Art in general.

What motivates you?

The excitement in illegal writing. And it's fun to write.

What makes a good piece?

There should be a wholeness, a fluency. Coloring is important. If you do a silver piece, background is important. I also think that small details make a good piece. If you concentrate on small things, you get a good whole. Theme pieces are cool, when several writers have the same fill-in and background.

What's bad about graffiti?

I don't like the fact that it's become so trendy. I mean, it's everywhere now, in magazines and ads, on T-shirts and in clothes stores. It was more fun when there was a greater resistance to graffiti. When society had a bigger anti-graffiti apparatus. Graffiti should be underground. Otherwise, I don't think there's much bad about graffiti. I'm a positive person.



Ellr – Stockholm commuter train



Help – Stockholm commuter train



Cia – Stockholm commuter train



Hell, Ellr – Stockholm commuter train



Hell, Ellr – Tullinge commuter train station, Stockholm



Ellr, Hell – Stockholm commuter train



Hell – Stockholm commuter train



Ellr – Stockholm commuter train



Jeks, Polar and Leik in Berlin, Germany 2003

Wise Guys

Wise Guys was founded in spring of 2002. It consist of the five members Gouge, Leik, Polar, Bore and Jeks. UP hooked up with Jeks for a quik conversation.

When did you start?

I did my first piece in 1992.

What inspires you?

Travel, new places, meeting other writers and my friends. German pieces.

What motivates you?

To constantly develop in my style. I'm never really satisfied but always want to outdo myself. I always see some little fault in the piece afterwards, and want to do better every time.

What's bad about graffiti?

I can't think of anything negative about graffiti.

What makes a good piece?

A consistent thread throughout the letters. That it all fits together well, and that the colour combinations are good. And I don't just mean burners. A good piece can be made in a real hurry, but still contain a unifying thought and be well-executed.



Leik, Rok2 - Innsbruck, Austria



Polar, Leik, Bore, Jeks - Norrköping, Sweden



Jeks – Bergen, Norway



Polar – Dalarna, Sweden



Gouge – Stockholm, Sweden



Leik, Bore – Gothenburg, Sweden



Polar, Gouge, Bore – Stockholm, Sweden



Jeks, Polar, Leik – Berlin, Germany





Hook – Stockholm subway

Hook

Hook has been one of the most prolific Stockholm writers for some time. UP meets him in a basement studio in a Stockholm suburb barely three years after he painted his first train.

What inspires you?

People around me, Copenhagen – the streets there are full of stuff. Stylistically, I like OG Crew, Dance and Whok. I am inspired by all the impressions I receive. I think my pieces reflect my personality.

What motivates you?

The awareness of the fun of writing. Nervousness, the kick, repetition and challenge drive me on.

What makes a good piece?

Purity, style, size. The piece also has to have life. I think there's a difference between colour pieces and silver pieces; a silver piece is good if it's big and mucky.

What's bad about graffiti?

Internet graffiti. Graffiti would be less exposed if it weren't for all the web pages and chat rooms on the internet. I also think toys are very annoying. I'd rather have twice as many guards and half the amount of toys.



Hook – Stockholm



Hook – Stockholm subway



Hook – Stockholm subway



Hook – Stockholm



Hook, Dance – Stockholm



Hook – Stockholm commuter train



Hook – Stockholm commuter train



Hook – Berlin subway.



Out, Nso, Hook – Stockholm commuter train



Kurir, P Nut

Kurir and P Nut

Graffiti writers often fall into different categories: either they do quick pieces on trains and well-guarded walls, or they go for well-made pieces, often on legal walls. In the southern suburbs of Stockholm, Kurir and P Nut are in between: their work is well-executed, but not legal, and their pieces are clearly visible from trains and roads.

When did you start?

P Nut: I started in 1992, but I mostly did tags at first.

Kurir: I started in 1995.

Who are the members of Pubb Crew?

P: It's hard to enumerate the members. Some don't write, some are b-boys and DJs. Pubb is more like a clique, a bunch of buddies. But in the beginning, it was a graffiti crew.

What inspires you?

P: That's a tough question! Almost all writers.

K: All good writers. Before, I was inspired by Copenhagen writers. The coolest are the ones who least resemble my style. AIS Crew from Copenhagen, for instance, Cave and Base and all those.

P: I think tags are cool.

K: Record covers have inspired me.

You said "all good writers". What makes a writer good?

P: Something that distinguishes their pieces. Technique isn't always the most important thing.

K: That's what I'm least interested in.

P: As long as there's a good swing to the letters, it's cool.

What's bad about graffiti?

P: Paint is too expensive! If I could afford it, I'd write much more. That's why I've done a lot of roller painting. It lasts longer. But it makes a damn mess of you. **K:** It took some time for us to start with the roller; it didn't feel like graffiti.

P: If you lose the itch, you can just cut out writing for a while. We do it mainly because it's fun, we're not out being hardcore all year round.

K: It's real social doing graffiti. All the people we know write, or at least like graffiti. If we hang around having a few beers, we're guaranteed to talk about graffiti for a few hours.

What motivates you to carry on?

K: The ego, to get better and better. But fame was never the most important thing to us.

P: I like to take up a lot of space when I write, to get real messy with the paint. And you can't do that at home.



P Nut



Kurir, P Nut



Pubb



P Nut, Kurir



Kurir, P Nut



Kurir



Kurir, P Nut



Qiter – Västerås

Qiter

Qiter started sketching around 1996. The following year, he started with spray cans. During the last year he has been an active writer in Gothenburg. His pieces are known from both trains and walls.

What inspires you?

Other writers, obviously. I don't look at magazines much, but I think what you see influences you quite a bit. I think it is good to look outside of graffiti. As graffiti in itself is quite conservativ, both the technique and the appearance.

What motivates you?

I don't really know. I guess I want to get better and develop. To try to make it a bit different from what you usually see.

It also motivates me to see other active writers, it makes me want to go on. Finally it motivates me to be able to look back at what I have done as something sensible, something that made me grow.

What's bad about graffiti?

The time it takes. It's working out all right now, but it's hard on days when you have less time to spare. And it can bring all kinds of trouble, too. So far, I think it's worth it, but I can see why some people might not always think so.

What makes a good piece?

That you can see that the person had an intent when he made it. That there is some thought behind the shapes. You can see that pretty quickly. And that it's personal and well done.



Qiter – Gothenburg



Qiter – Gothenburg



Qiterr – 'Kustpilen', Intercity train



Qiter – Interregio



Qiter – Interregio



Qiter – Gothenburg commuter train



Qiter – Gothenburg



Qiterr – Gothenburg



Qiter – Gothenburg



Qiterr – Gothenburg



Qiter – Gothenburg



Qiter – Gothenburg



Rider – Malmö, Sweden

Rider

Rider made his first piece in Uppsala in 1993. He has artfully succeeded in developing a severe oldschool style into something fresh and personal. With his crew REA, he has produced a number of well-crafted walls all around Sweden. UP got in touch with Rider in order to show a few of his works.

What inspires you?

Nearly all my inspiration comes from graffiti, especially older graffiti from the late 80s. I think pieces were a lot better before. Otherwise, I prefer writers with simple styles, Like Nug. But I can get inspiration from all kinds of graffiti.

What motivates you?

Right now, I'm not very motivated. But what keeps me writing most is that it's such damn fun. When I was younger, I mostly wrote to be visible, now I think it's a fun thing to do with your buddies. It's sociable.

What makes a good piece?

Style. That's the most important thing. If a piece has style, I think it's good. It doesn't have to have any special coloring or great technique.

What's bad about graffiti?

Graffiti has a tendency to steal a lot of time from other things in life. Work or school can suffer, for instance. And if you're unlucky, the consequences can cost you. I also think that there are people in graffiti culture who do it for the wrong reasons, who don't bring anything to it. A third negative aspect of graffiti is that it's easy to get tunnel vision and become limited. To stop developing.



Rider – Stockholm, Sweden



Rider – Norrköping, Sweden



Rider – Copenhagen, Denmark



Rider – Norrköping, Sweden



Rider, Tyse – Barcelona, Spain



Rider – Stockholm, Sweden



Rider – Stockholm, Sweden



Ohs, Ner – Malmö, 2003

Ner

In later years, **NER Crew** have become famous for their constant delivery of stylistically and technically well-executed train pieces. **NER** started in 1995, and has members in both the Swedish city of Malmö and the Danish capital Copenhagen. **UP** got in touch with Leon and Marvel for a quick chat.

What does NER mean?

Leon: It doesn't mean anything; they're just cool letters.

Who are the members in NER?

Marvel: From Sweden, we have Wena, Leon, Marvel, Alma, Thed and Oikot, though he no longer writes. From Denmark, we have Bravo, Pyton and Voise.

What inspires you?

L: I've always like to draw and try to create things. And I'm inspired by all sorts of things, not necessarily graffiti; basically, chaos.

M: It's hard to point out anything in particular, but good food, fun company, cool places. Feeling good or being frustrated.

What motivates you?

L: Firstly, beer, song and women. Then being a nuisance. Graffiti is a good way to be a nuisance. It contains so much: art and vandalism. It's the perfect stuff for devilry.

M: Sometimes I feel I have to write. And I feel good when I've done it, when I've succeeded. The feeling motivates me.

What makes a good piece?

M: A style of your own. There should be an underlying good thought. It doesn't have to be good technically, as long as balance and composition are all right. Composition is important.

L: It should be something of your own. You shouldn't borrow too much. As long as you work with a style of your own, I think it's good. Then I like effects, like glitter and stuff.

What's bad about graffiti?

M: It's not very healthy. There's too much beer, and it can ruin certain other opportunities in life.

L: A lot of things. Internet graffiti is really bad. Toys are annoying, but a necessary evil. After all, they are going to carry graffiti on.

I think it's a shame that graffiti has become a nerdy culture. Before, when I started writing, it consisted of social misfits. Nowadays, it's all nerds, idiots who don't know where to go and therefore start writing graffiti. The whole culture gets labelled as nerdy.

I don't like "Montana" pieces either. A way of painting with only Monatana cans with fatcaps has appeared in the past five years. It doesn't look good. You need a bit of finesse, thinner lines and details.



Ner – Malmö, 2003



Ner, Marr, Zion – Malmö, 2003



Ner – Amsterdam subway, 2003



Ner – Holland, 2002



Ner – Copenhagen, 2003



Ner – Hamburg subway, 2002



Oden – Hamburg subway, 2002



Ner crew – Copenhagen, 2003





Bug, Glue, Urne, Fame Crew

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Hook, Tier, Heor



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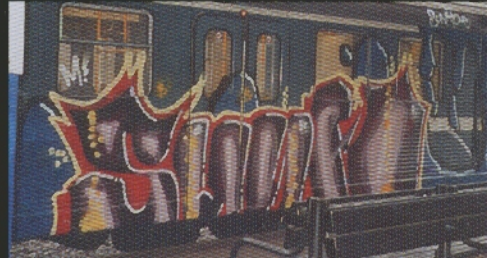
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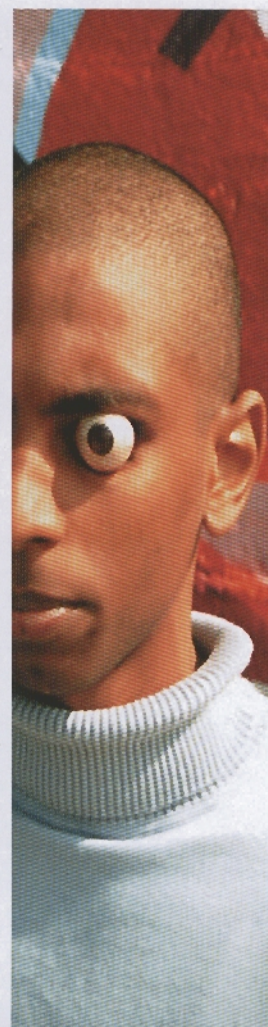
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SAMPAYO & RUBIO AD 2003



Cast, One – Regina commuter train

SWEDISH TRAINS



Dr. Död – Västerns commuter train



Nuek – Interregio



Mabe, Reil – Interregio



Ohs – Krösa commuter train



Vifi



Fiol, Qbik – Freight train



Bus – Krösa commuter train



Expo, Filo. According to the writers, these are the first pieces made on the new Regina. 'Upptaget



Fiol, Tems, Expo – Gävle

SWEDISH WALLS



Kurir, Qpong – Norrköping



Sul – Luleå



The Professor



Hak – Norrköping



Dekis – Uppsala



Nuek – Dalarna



Dekis – Norrköping



Nug, Erse, Kaos, Bruce – Norrköping



Astron painting at Helsinki's first gallery exhibition with graffiti.

Helsinki curator wants to start a debate

Helsinki Hall of Fame at the start of January was Helsinki's first gallery exhibition with graffiti. But it was also a piece of art – a graffiti hall of fame as an installation.

At night invited writers paint. In the daytime the audience can look at the pieces, before they are painted over again with new pieces in the evening.

The audience is not given any pedagogic information and you get the feeling that the paintings have not at all been adapted to the gallery format. That is not the point either, the curator of the exhibition **Karri Kuoppala** tells us. He has told all writers not to try to do anything better or differently had it been an illegal piece.

"I wanted it to look as much as possible like illegal graffiti. In Helsinki it is not easy to get to see graffiti, because the city removes it so fast."

The idea behind the exhibition is not to get the visitors hooked on graffiti, but to show them what it is and make them form their own opinion of it.

The most important thing to Kuoppala is to get a discussion started, something he thinks is missing in Helsinki.

"Politicians spend a lot of money to get rid of graffiti, but few know on what and why."

To start a discussion is the political aim of the exhibition. But more important is the social aim – to recreate a spirit of community among the writers. Hard opposition begin-

ning in the mid-nineties has shattered the Helsinki graffiti scene.

As a casual visitor you are disappointed with some of the pieces. You get the feeling that some of the invited writers do a better job when they paint illegally. The will not to show off seems to have created a lower level of ambition than usual. Or maybe it is just that a wall in a small room demands more details and a more precise technique than the side of a train or a concrete wall viewed from a distance.

Jacob Kimvall and Malcolm Jacobson
See all pieces at www.mymalaz.com



Gugi, Torske



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Jamie Hewlett

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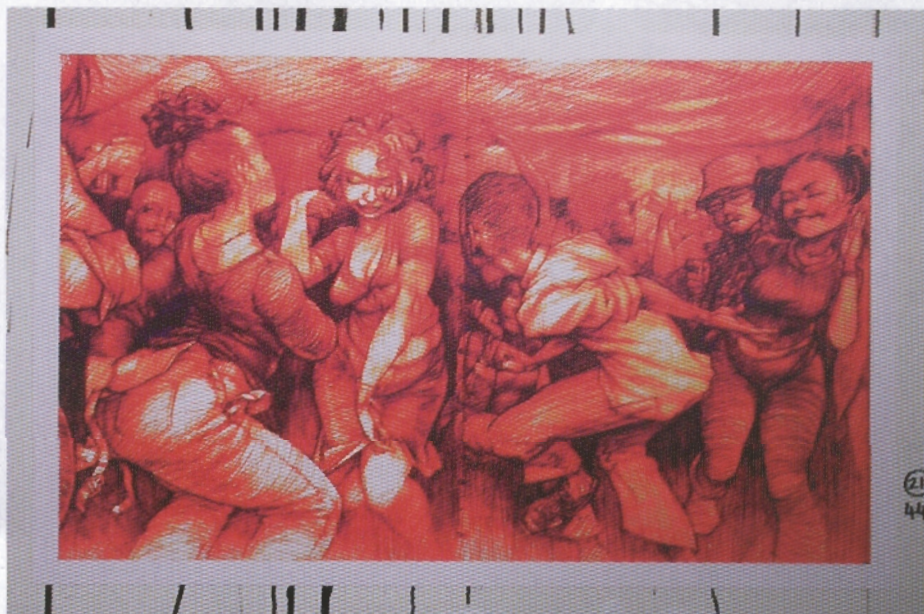
Last December, the Santa's Ghetto exhibition was temporarily held in a small side street by Carnaby Street in London's Soho area. At the origin of the idea were the street artist **Banksy**, Tank Girl creator and Gorillaz founder **Jamie Hewlett** in collaboration with the **POW** (Pictures On Walls) web site.

"Art is sold at incredible prices that no normal person can afford. We don't understand why art should be so expensive – we know how long it takes to produce. We wanted to undermine the art world and show them that it could be done cheaply," said Jamie Hewlett to the British daily newspaper **The Independent**.

Crowds of people came to see the works that were being exhibited during the Christmas rush.

"We've sold beyond our expectations. And it's fun to see the kinds of people who come here. The thing about this central location is that anyone can walk in without realizing what kind of a shop it is. Both ordinary tourists and graffiti habitués have been here. At first we thought that we'd be completely bombed by people who thought selling graffiti was a sell-out, but we seemed to have managed. Everybody seems to like the idea, and we're pleased about that," POW founder **Steve Lazarides** told us shortly before Christmas.

Text and photo by **Gustaf Kjellin**



Mode 2



Banksy



